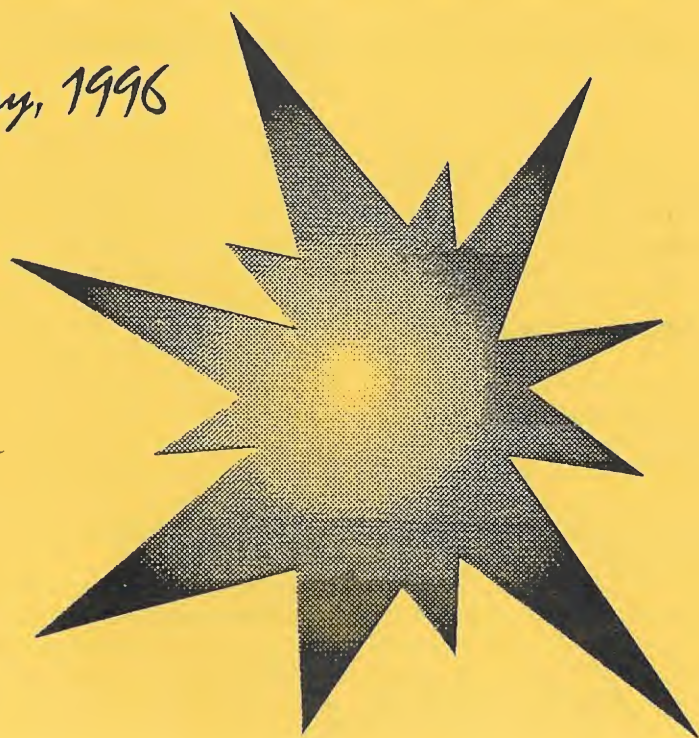


The SPARK!

Political discussion bulletin

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Inside: Assessing the 'Collapse' of Socialism
in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

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*The Spark! is a discussion bulletin on
programmatic and general political matters.*

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CANADA GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE

*Statement of the Central Executive Committee,
Communist Party of Canada – October 31, 1995*

The razor-thin "NO" victory in the Quebec referendum has staved off the imminent break-up of Canada, and generated undeniable momentum for structural change. The critical question before Canadians now will be the content of that change.

In our opinion, that change must be more than cosmetic. It must be constitutional change that recognizes, at long last, Quebec's national status, and the fundamental rights of the First Nations in a new, equal and voluntary partnership.

The working class and its democratic allies must play a decisive role in demanding an open, democratic process—through a democratically-elected Constituent Assembly—to achieve constitutional reforms which could provide a lasting solution to the Crisis of Confederation.

The tiny 56,000 vote plurality for the "No," among some 5 million eligible voters who cast ballots, reflects deep divisions in Quebec society, including within the working class itself. But the referendum debate and results make crystal clear that most Quebecers are united on some key points; namely, that Quebec is not just "one province among many," but a nation within Canada, with the right of self-determination, including secession if it so chooses.

The results also demonstrate that regardless of how people actually voted—both in the "No" camp, and many who voted "Yes" to strengthen Quebec's constitutional bargaining position—a large majority continue to support Quebec's inclusion in a united Canada, provided that fundamental democratic change is forthcoming.

To try to achieve a mandate for separation, the narrow nationalist forces, led by Quebec premier Jacques Parizeau and *Bloc Québécois* leader Lucien Bouchard, skilfully exploited this genuine desire for national recognition and widespread frustration with previous failed

efforts at constitutional renewal. They obscured the real content of the "Yes" mandate to attract those who support change, but not separation. Bouchard's emotional appeal to "national pride," while downplaying the costs of independence, convinced many "undecideds." This tactic almost succeeded.

The utter bankruptcy of the "No" campaign leadership almost snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. Quebec Liberal leader Daniel Johnson, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and their Big Business friends in Quebec and across Canada promoted fear of the economic consequences of a "Yes" vote, and floated vague promises rather than concrete proposals for change. The smugly over-confident Chrétien pressured democratic opinion, especially outside Quebec, to remain virtually silent, neutralizing the pro-unity forces both inside and outside of Quebec. These tactics severely weakened the federalist campaign.

Only when it became obvious that the bungled "No" campaign was in trouble was there a desperate appeal for grassroots displays of support for Canadian unity. The pro-unity demonstrations in Montreal and other cities brought out hundreds of thousands of Quebecois and other Canadians in support of a united Canada. These welcome mass actions helped tip the balance back—albeit narrowly—in favour of the "No" forces. These rallies showed strong support for Canada-Quebec unity, but also widespread confusion about how this can be achieved.

Where Does Canada Go From Here?

The most compelling conclusion of this drama is that change is now firmly on the political agenda. Will it be progressive or reactionary change? Will it lead to the provincial devolution

of power, which only serves the interests of big capital and the transnationals, or will it lead to a democratic Constituent Assembly?

As the Communist Party stated last January: "The status quo is no longer good enough—it never was. Neither is the break-up of the country in the best interests of working people. But there is another option – a democratic solution to the Crisis of Confederation."

Indeed, the referendum results may have created the best conditions to achieve a democratic solution. Had the "yes" forces prevailed, the Parizeau government would have attempted to engineer a forced march to Quebec separation, to the dismemberment of Canada. And had the "No" majority been substantial, the ruling circles in Canada would have tried to table constitutional change indefinitely. Now they cannot ignore the national aspirations of the people of Quebec, nor the strong desire among people in the rest of Canada and in the First Nations for a democratic solution. They must return to the negotiation table. *An opening has been created.*

Ultimately, this means addressing the underlying causes of the constitutional crisis. The Communist Party has pointed out for some time that: "Canada's constitution was flawed from the start... The denial of Quebec's national status and rights within Canada, and the denial of the rights of the First Nations, lie at the centre of the current crisis, which will continue to erupt until these rights are fully guaranteed in the constitution—the fundamental law—of this country."

The Crisis of Confederation has been exacerbated by recent government policies. By adopting the corporate agenda, including "free trade" and the undermining of Canadian sovereignty, and attacks on social programs, both the federal Liberals and reactionary provincial governments have weakened support for Canadian unity, bringing the crisis to a head. This shows that big capital and its pro-corporate political parties have no solutions to offer.

Working people should not underestimate the big business forces resisting democratic constitutional change. The Parti Quebecois

government quickly signalled its intent to proceed with its independence agenda, despite the referendum results. It will no doubt continue to whip up narrow nationalist fervour—even intolerance and racism—at home, while also trying to deepen the constitutional and inter-governmental crisis in hopes of creating favourable conditions for another run at independence.

Elsewhere in Canada, big business interests represented by the Chrétien government, the Reform Party and reactionary provincial governments want to weaken federal powers and "download" federal programs like Medicare, pensions and social services to the provinces. Using Quebec's legitimate demands and the "war" on the federal deficit as excuses, they want to dismantle the "social safety net," and undermine Canada's and Quebec's sovereignty in favour of "free trade," while denying Quebec's national status and the fundamental rights of the First Nations in a new constitution.

These approaches will only deepen the crisis, divide and weaken the working class and its democratic allies, and threaten the sovereignty of Canada, further opening the door to absorption by U.S. imperialism.

Instead, we need a broad grassroots campaign for an open democratic process to solve the crisis. In our opinion, a solution must be based on a new, constitution guaranteeing the equal, voluntary partnership of Quebec and the rest of Canada, together with the right of self-government and other fundamental rights for First Nations.

We support the convening of a democratically-elected Constituent Assembly, composed of equal representatives from Quebec and the rest of Canada, and the full participation of the First Nations, to hammer out a new draft constitution and take it back to the Canadian people for full discussion.

More and more Canadians are embracing the idea of a Constituent Assembly, which has never been so urgent. Even Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells, while doggedly refusing to recognize Quebec's nationhood, has publicly endorsed the concept.

The challenge before the working class and democratic-minded Canadians is to make the demand for a Constituent Assembly their own, and to build mass pressure on governments to yield to this democratic process. Now is the time for the Canadian Labour Congress, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and other democratic organizations to

speak out for this demand. For its part, the Communist Party will continue to press for a Constituent Assembly and a new, equal and democratic union.

Never before has the opportunity to win a democratic solution to the crisis been so great. Never before has so much been at stake!

Assessing the "Collapse" of Socialism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe

In June 1995, the Communist Party of Greece organized an international theoretical conference in Athens to discuss the causes of the downfall of socialist governments in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the resulting crisis in the international communist movement in general. More than 20 communist, left and workers' parties presented papers at this important meeting.

Below we present the abridged text of the paper presented by CEC member Darrell Rankin on behalf of the Communist Party

of Canada, and excerpts from papers given by representatives of other parties. Extended excerpts from three parties—the Communist Party of Greece, the Tudeh Party of Iran, and the Socialist Party of Australia are included, together with representative portions of papers by other parties.

[Unfortunately, space does not allow for the reproduction in full of all papers; however, the CPG will hopefully publish the full deliberations of the conference sometime in the near future.]

Observations on the setbacks to Socialism — Darrell Rankin, Central Exec. Comm. Communist Party of Canada

The Communist Party of Canada welcomes this opportunity to exchange ideas on the setbacks to socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and thanks the Communist Party of Greece for organizing this conference.. The revolutionary transformations that lie ahead require that we fully comprehend the most recent lessons of the contest between socialism and capitalism.

The 1917 October Revolution placed before the working class practical tasks of building socialism. For almost seventy five years, socialism in the Soviet Union and later Eastern Europe was more than a theory. The actual

creation of socialist societies posed the main tasks, realities and problems for both the working and capitalist classes, determining much of twentieth century history.

Now with the recent reverses to socialism, it is vital to assimilate rapidly the rich lessons of socialism in this century. This has immense practical significance for all nations and the whole working class. Imperialism is far from solving its great contradictions.

Imperialism stand in the way of a world without war and exploitation. This makes it incumbent upon Marxist-Leninist forces—the revolutionary forces—to evaluate correctly

socialism's advances and reverses, and prepare for the ever more necessary task of ridding the earth of imperialism.

1. Problems and features of Marxism and socialism in this century

The October Revolution shook the world for most of this century. For the first time, the working class, in alliance with peasants, won power long enough to begin building socialism in one country. To begin evaluating socialism in this century, it is useful to recall key theories as they were developed prior to the October Revolution. Marx's view of the 1871 Paris Commune was quoted by Lenin in 1905:

The Commune was ... to serve as a lever for uprooting the economic foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple* (by decree of the people – ed.). They know that in order to work out their own emancipation and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realise, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant.¹

In their last joint preface to the *Communist Manifesto* in 1872, Marx and Engels noted that some details had become "out of date," going on to say:

One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes'...

In his *State and Revolution*, Lenin was concerned with the steps taken by the Commune about the state. He noted that the workers after taking power will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, and take measures observed by Marx and Engels in the Commune to prevent the workers from themselves becoming

bureaucrats:

...(1) not only election, but recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become "bureaucrats" for a time and that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a "bureaucrat."²

This much was clear to Marxists before the October Revolution: that for the working class to have power, the "bureaucracy" must be all working people, replacing the old bureaucracy; and especially that such a democratic "bureaucracy" is a condition for the working class to win its own emancipation and create a higher form of society.

This century's history is framed by the democratic and socialist advances, and the recent reversals, which followed the October Revolution. The military, economic and ideological contest between capitalism and socialism, between the revolutionary working class and imperialism, was at times severe and dramatic, and at times socialism and sections of imperialism cooperated, such as during the anti-fascist alliance during the Second World War.

The wealth of experience of working class rule in the 20th century covers all areas of theory, tactics and strategy. But socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe always depended on the working and peasant classes' alliance, and on the leadership of the communist parties for these classes' revolutionary democratic rule.

It is therefore important to examine the extent to which departures from this condition led to the recent setbacks to socialism. For example, one observation is that the CPSU's 1961 programme opened the door to ambiguous interpretations of working class power. That programme said:

However varied the forms of a new, people's state power in the period of socialist construction their essence will be the same – dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents genuine democracy, democracy for the working people.

This is Marxist, although it has a seemingly unneeded definition. But the programme continues elsewhere:

The state, which arose as a state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, has, in the new, contemporary stage, become a state of the entire people, an organ expressing the interests and will of the people as a whole.

Here the programme allows an inconsistency: the proletariat is becomes the whole people, i.e. a classless society, and the whole state. Let us go on to relate how one Soviet author, F. Burlatsky, described this ambiguity after the 1961 Congress:

The definition of a state made by Marxist-Leninists in the past is obviously inadequate to describe the state of the whole people. The state of the whole people is not the instrument of one class. It represents the interests and the will of all the classes and sections of society. It is not an instrument for the suppression by one class of the others, because there are none to be suppressed in Soviet society.³

Here Burlatsky departs from the basic definition of the state as an instrument of class rule, and fails to say which class has power. He elsewhere lists features of this new stage of the state:

...spectacular growth of the country's productive forces and other resources; gradual eradication of distinctions between the various classes, and the formation of a homogeneous working people's society; further coming together of the nations and consolidation of the socio-political and ideological unity of society; greatly improved international position of the Soviet Union conditioned by the emergence of the world socialist system and the advantage gained in the balance of forces by socialism and peace over imperialism and war.⁴

This is a rather early departure from a valid evaluation of the situation, and especially from any idea of the possibility of negative shifts in the balance of forces.

This does not answer the degree to which the crisis originated earlier than under the last Soviet governments. Nor does it answer the degree to which the internal and external causes of the crisis are related, which they surely are, if only because the working class is national in form only, as it is put in the *Communist*

Manifesto.

And in that international respect, it leaves open the question of the immediate influence of the disunity in the working class between revolutionary and reformist sections, especially when it is known that other crises of imperialism provoked – and deepened – serious divisions in the working class, such as during the First World War.

Some other distortions of socialism were criticized and apparently halted, such as the cult of the individual and abuse of power under Stalin. Other differences and crises arose in the world communist movement after the Second World War, affecting its practical and ideological unity.

2. Socialist and capitalist crises today

The best solution to this lack of unity and ideological discord should have been the continued successes of socialism. But rather a gradual accumulation of difficulties occurred, ending in crisis. At our 31st Convention this year, the Communist Party of Canada made some preliminary observations about the crisis of socialism, summarized here:

Subjective and unresearched reactions are giving way to more sober, scientific analysis of both the objective and subjective causes of the crisis. The crisis of socialism came about as a result of a combination of related internal and external causes. Communists must not lose sight of or underestimate the role of external factors. The class hatred of capitalism for all things socialist goes back even beyond the 125 years since the Paris Commune.

The precise internal causes of the crisis require much more research. In our view, the internal causes did not spring from the intrinsic nature of socialism, but rather from distortions and outright departures from socialist theory and practice. We believe study should be concentrated in three primary subject areas. The first area relates to the economic construction of socialism. Despite early success, contradictions accumulated in socialist economic management....

The second main area deals with the role of the vanguard party, its relationship to the administration of the state, and its political connection to the working class, and to the people as a whole. Glaring errors and distortions arose in this area. At root, these problems reflected a fundamental underestimation of the role of democracy in constructing socialism, and stunted the political role of the working class in leading this transformation and the building of a new society.

The third main area relates to the neglect and stagnation of theory, and its dogmatic and inappropriate application, for instance, in estimating the world situation, in underestimating the resilience of capitalism, in proclaiming the irreversibility of socialist advances and relying on a military balance of forces between socialism and capitalism, as well as errors and insensitivity to the national question and the environment.

Perhaps the most costly result of the ossification of Marxist-Leninist theory was the weakening of the Party itself, including its ability to identify and combat the rise of opportunist, reformist and openly counter-revolutionary views within and beyond its own ranks.

The crisis of socialism has created new realities, problems and tasks. What is assuring is that we know the material and technological basis of socialism is much firmer than ever before. It is more clear to many that the apologists of capitalism can claim only a limited victory, despite having created the maximum amount of confusion about socialism.

Although the losses are immense, not all the gains of socialism are gone, and pro-socialist forces are winning back some ground. As our 1992 30th Convention put it, it is easier to change governments and ideologies than an entire socio-economic system. But unless the ideological and political struggle is based on valid theory, more reverses are possible.

During the last fifty years following the Second World War, imperialism's development has been relatively peaceful and until the 1970s

somewhat stable. Imperialism was able to develop its productive forces, although wastefully and by impoverishing working people. Especially in the last twenty years ever broader sections of working people have experienced an increasingly precarious existence. Imperialism offers an ever smaller minority of people a life with a future.

3. Conclusion

The Communist Party of Canada is working to block further reversals to socialism, the working class and world peace. We recognize these urgent struggles at the national level must be combined with international coordination among communists, and by labour and its allies. The need to curb imperialism makes a broad and anti-imperialist front capable of uniting all progressive streams an imperative goal.

We also recognize the need to examine constantly the theoretical issues raised by the advances and setbacks to socialism. An important lesson is that theoretical distortions of Marxism-Leninism led some sections of the international communist movement, including in Canada, to rely too much on existing socialism to pave the way forward and to block imperialism.

This has made it more important than ever to learn from and take advantage of the main contradictions within imperialism. History has not ended, and the sources of modern socialism have not disappeared from capitalism. The Communist Party of Canada is confident that socialism will triumph.

Notes

1. Lenin, "Paris Commune and Tasks of Democratic Dictatorship [July 1905]" *On the Paris Commune* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974), pp. 117-118. (Or see Karl Marx, "Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association on the Civil War in France, 1871," *The Civil War in France* (International Publishers, New York, 1940), pp. 61-62.)

2. Lenin, "The State and Revolution," *Collected Works* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964), p. 486.
3. F. Burlatsky, *The State and Communism* (Progress Publishers, Moscow: no date, ca. 1961), p. 106.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

— from the Tudeh Party of Iran

The Tudeh Party of Iran has always believed that the October Revolution and the inception of Socialism in Russia has been an epoch making event. As believers of scientific socialism we cannot but accept that the defeat of the socialist system in the USSR and the Eastern Europe has had and will continue to have significant consequences for the working class movement worldwide.

It is our view that the discussion about these important setbacks will continue for some time to come and only through sincere scientific and objective research will we be able to arrive at genuine conclusions facilitating the progress of the movement in its historic mission.

The 20th century awoke with the chimes of the Great October Revolution, and for the first time human society was faced with a structure set up with the aim of achieving equality, employment and freedom for all. With the victory of the October Revolution, the world took a determined step on the path of immense, unpredictable change.

The October victory put an end to the myth of the invincibility of the capitalist system and proved in practice that the antithesis of capitalism is socialism.

The construction of the socialist system in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was a complex and difficult experience which was attempted without the benefit of any previous or existing experience, and for this reason, as Lenin too declared, major mistakes were inevitable in this process.

Since 1989 the end of the Socialist System

has often has been referred to as a "collapse." In as much as the rapidity of the social, economic and political changes fundamentally changed the character of the socialist states in a relatively short historical period, the word collapse may be appropriate.

However, collapse in some respects implies the changes were entirely or predominantly due to internal factors, rather than a combination of the internal and external, or even the external providing not only a context but also a starting point for all internal considerations which affected socialist development and subsequent defeat.

In this presentation we argue that Socialism's defeat, especially in the Soviet Union, was a multi-faceted phenomenon which had its origins in the historical foundation of the Revolution itself, its subsequent struggle to develop the productive forces and the unavoidable international economic, military and political competition with imperialism.

It is argued, with some justification, that following Lenin's work to develop the theoretical heritage of Marx and Engels enough attention has not always been directed to studying the complexities of transition from an exploitative economic and social order to a society based on the concepts of equality and freedom. The politics of transition through the stages towards developed capitalism have been well researched and understood, they form the roots of scientific socialism; however the politics of socialist transformation are by comparison relatively unexplored.

*The February 1995 issue of
The Spark! included "Notes on
Canadian Political Economy"
as a contribution to the
Communist Party programme
discussion. The CPC
Programme Commission is
still waiting for responses to
publish.*

Russia in 1917 proved to be the weakest link. But not the most economically developed in terms of capital accumulation, level of productive forces or in the nature of production itself.

It should be recognised that in Russia, the working class by and large by-passed the experience of sharpening of the contradictions between development of the forces of production and the relations of production.

During the short period of his guiding role for the revolutionary state Lenin tried to address the above factor. His many references to the idea of state capitalism, his introduction of New Economic Policy (NEP) and his references to "many transitional stages" in the process of socialist transformation in Russia were all to deal with this deficiency of the new situation.

In the 1918 congress of the party Lenin states:

"Taken by the wave of enthusiasm that had awakened people, firstly political enthusiasm, then military enthusiasm, we believed that we could perform only on the basis of this enthusiasm economic tasks with the same magnitude of political and military tasks. We thought, or perhaps we supposed without having studied enough, that it was possible to organise in a direct form, on the basis of the simple existence of the proletarian state, state production and state distribution of goods, in a communist manner, in a country of small peasants. Experience has shown our mistakes. It made us see that a series of stages are necessary in the transition. We have only given the first steps to free ourselves from capitalism and start the transition to socialism. We do not know and can not know how many transitional stages there will be in socialism."

This raises questions as to whether Lenin would have followed the same path as was taken by his successors.

There should be no doubt that the problems which surfaced later in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries had their roots in these conditions. Let's examine the concept of labour productivity in the economies of socialist countries.

Up to the mid-seventies all socialist

economies without exception increased labour productivity compared to pre-revolutionary period. But the growth was increasingly slower than in the main capitalist countries. It seems that a simplistic analysis of capitalism's potential to overcome periodic crisis and a mechanistic understanding of the decaying character of imperialism were partly responsible for the lack of political decisiveness to carry forward some painful adjustments in the society and economy.

The tendency to assume the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism and the assumption that it would only be a matter of time led to underestimating capitalism's potential to survive the socialist challenge. Is it not a fact that the effects of technological revolution of the 70s and early 80s in the capitalist world largely escaped the attention of economic planners of the socialist world? The socialist countries underestimated the capacity of capitalism to adapt itself to the new situation. We overlooked what Marx and Engels has already stated in the *Communist Manifesto*: "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production and with them whole relations of society."

After the initial period following the Second World War, capitalism's ideological offensive against socialism took a new and very sophisticated form. Ideological warfare waged by imperialism in the form of Radio Free Europe or other agencies were only part of a very carefully planned and well resourced offensive. Capitalist propaganda directly questioned the validity of new concepts such as social provision, collective advance and solidarity.

Weakness of the governing Communist and workers parties to educate and politically convince people of the supremacy of collective advance in socialist society over individual self-advance promoted by capitalism developed into passivity towards the system. Soviets which were originally introduced as the forms of socialist self-government were effectively abandoned. It is an irony that it was the last version of the Soviet Constitution which recognised that "Soviet people should know no

other power over them than the power of their own organisation through the Soviets”.

Socialism is inherently democratic. It relies on the participation of masses in every sphere of life in the society. The role of the party, as the political vanguard, is essential for constantly improving popular mobilisation around the main topics of concern to the society. People in socialist society should feel empowered through their organisations (Soviets) to take charge of society. Education and genuine political participation are most important tools to be employed by the party.

It is to its historic credit that the Soviet Communist Party lifted the illiterate masses out of ignorance in a very short time. General and technical education in the socialist countries became a priority, but this too gave rise to contradictions.

Greater material expectations and cultural diversity were two results; however in the context of a hostile and aggressive imperialism eager to destabilise socialist society and global communications, such expectations and diversity were not easy to accommodate. Unfortunately socialism's response was sometimes coercive and socialist democracy was often replaced with paranoia and fear.

It is no secret that the socialist societies experienced difficulty in coping with ideological pluralism. While this was partly due to hostile imperialist activities, the simplification of complex phenomena such as socio-economic relations in the society and conflicting attitudes to them played a destructive role.

There was a belief that every critic hated the system and wished to see its doom. Therefore, anyone who was not for it was against it. It became less clear who was against the socialist system and who was merely critical of some methods. The result was the creation of a weakness in the society that was difficult to overcome.

As communists in the post-Soviet era we face unprecedented challenges. The scale of socialism's defeat can not be underestimated; capitalism considers itself victorious.

However we know too that capitalism cannot

escape its own contradictions arising from the class struggle. Today communists face two key challenges: to learn and study the nature of the historic setbacks of the late 1980s and early 1990s and to engage in the on-going class struggle which will mean building new alliances against capitalism and projecting the ideas and values of socialism.

Just as socialism has helped to shape the 20th century, it will and must be a deciding factor in shaping the destiny of the 21st Century.

Comrades, it is up to us, the struggle is there to win.

— from the Socialist Party of Australia

It is for us all to learn from the tragic turn of events in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

It would be wrong to suggest that the tragedy was the responsibility of one or two individuals in the recent past, although those who held the most responsible positions have to carry a heavy share for the events...

We believe that the main cause is to be found in departures from a full understanding and application of Marxist ideology. This steadily weakened the socialist system and the leadership of communist parties.

Commodity production

Socialism has the objective of overthrowing the capitalist system and bringing to an end exploitation of the working people. If however, planning in the interests of the working people is undermined, if the blind forces of supply and demand, commodity exchange and profitability become the criteria rather than social need, a process is unleashed that can lead to the regeneration of capitalism.

While the dramatic turn towards “market economics” in the late '80s and early '90s is well known, the fact that they were being argued in the early '50s is less well known.

It was a long road in the Soviet Union from

this beginning to the outright adoption of "market economics" in recent times but, none-the-less, a foot was put on that road at that time. Profitability, the law of value, exploitation of labour, commodity exchange and the relegation of planning all became common place in the late '80s and, what is ever more scandalous, become accepted by leading communists.

Socialist economic problems, such as central planning and its relation to responsibility at enterprise level, should be solved within the framework of socialist economics and only in that framework.

This is not to say that in certain periods and in certain circumstances, elements of capitalist production may not exist in a socialist country for a time. But, we believe that concepts such as "social-oriented market economy" or a "socialist market economy" have to be carefully examined from fundamental ideological positions.

Dialectical and Historical Materialism

There have been departures from Marxist philosophy as well... The claim that the Soviet State had become a "state of the whole people" and that the CPSU was also a party of the whole people were exaggerations which recent events have proven to be false. The breach in relations between the Soviet Union and China can also be traced back to hasty estimations and subjectivism. This did enormous long term damage to the international communist movement.

A virtual abandonment of historical materialism in the analysis of societies led to distortions of the role of the masses and of individuals.

An example is the speech delivered by N. Khrushchev at the time of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 when a one-sided execration of Stalin took place. What was required, and is still required today, is an objective and truthful evaluation of the whole period and the role played by Stalin.

Neglect of this task has allowed the enemies of the Soviet Union and anti-communists

everywhere to heap slander upon slander without any adequate response. Generalised anti-Stalinism rapidly becomes an offensive against Marxism-Leninism as a whole as has been seen in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

The contest between dialectical materialism and idealism

The influence in the communist movement of bourgeois ideology and its petty-bourgeois expression which Marx, Engels, Lenin and others fought so strenuously and exposed so incisively, remains a predominant influence in many societies and inevitably infiltrates all communist parties.

Within our communist movement it expresses itself in the twin evils of left-sectarianism and dogmatism, on the one hand, and right opportunism and revisionism on the other. In our opinion, both have a common origin in idealism, the ideology of the bourgeoisie.

The experiences of the period have shown for all to see where petty-bourgeois ideology leads to in practice and this can be turned into a plus for our movement.

When it gains the upper hand in a socialist country it leads to the liquidation of socialism and the victory of counter-revolution, the regeneration of capitalism.

Class Struggle

Lenin, in his "Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism" wrote: "The genius of Marx lies in his having been the first to deduce from this the lesson world history teaches and to apply that lesson consistently. The deduction he made is the doctrine of the class struggle." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 19 p 27 - English edition).

Widespread and persistent efforts by the ruling class to deny this truth has overwhelmed many in the recent period, yet the reality of the class struggle swirls around us every day, including in former socialist countries.

The social democrats propagate the idea of

"common interests" between workers and exploiters and claim to represent all society. They everywhere dampen the class struggle and are prepared to use the forces of the capitalist state to suppress the workers' struggles.

What is remarkable is that some former communists have also become protagonists of these false theories. Gorbachov was not the only person to abandon the class struggle by advancing non-class concepts of democracy and the idea of "universal human values." They were presented by some in my own country a decade before Gorbachov advanced them.

They forgot to ask themselves the simple question—democracy for whom? On the question of human values they failed to see that the values of the working class and progressive forces are entirely different to those of the ruling class who are motivated by greed, exploitation, debasement of culture, force, corruption and deceit.

They also wish to deny that class struggle remains the motive force of social change. Abandonment of the class struggle leads inevitably to an accommodation with capitalism.

There are other issues in the field of ideology which could be considered such as nationalism and internationalism, but time does not permit except to say that, unfortunately, bourgeois nationalism also affects the working class and infiltrates communist parties as well. Again, unfortunately, the international communist movement has failed to provide opportunities to discuss questions relating to nationalism and internationalism over a long period. Because there is no such thing as an ideological vacuum, the absence of discussion has led to an increase in nationalist tendencies in our movement as well.

The Party and Socialism

An integral part of the revolutionary working class is its Party, guided by the great ideas and principles of Marxism-Leninism. Nothing that has happened undermines their truth nor the necessity and validity of socialism.

Socialism has not been won nor built anywhere without the existence of an

ideologically strong and influential communist or workers' party. No social democratic party, no Trotskyist party nor any "New Left" party has succeeded. This is not an argument against coalitions and united fronts but to turn a communist or workers party into a pluralist party, meaning by that, a party with multi-ideological trends is not the way. There will, of course, always be differences of opinion on a range of questions but they have to be resolved within the framework of Marxist ideology.

— from the Communist Party of Britain

The Communist Party of Britain rejects the view that the collapse of the Soviet Union shows that socialism itself has failed and is no longer relevant to the solution of the many problems facing the people of the world today...

The root cause of the collapse lay in the particular forms of economic and political structures which developed in the Soviet Union. Specifically, the great mass of working people came to be progressively excluded from any direct control over their economic and social destiny. This erosion of the very essence of socialism increasingly affected all aspects of Soviet society....

The effects of encirclement by hostile imperialist forces cannot be underestimated. the problems this caused for the Soviet Union—diplomatically, militarily, politically, culturally, and above all economically—were immense....

From the late 1920s onwards, decisions began to be made which took Soviet society down a road leading to the violation, in important respects, of socialist and democratic principles. The main effects of this can be summarized as follows:

- There was an excessive centralization of political power, which in effect eroded the rights of the elected Soviets. This was accompanied by restrictions on democratic rights....

- Bureaucratic commands replaced economic levers as an instrument of planning. Everything was subordinated to this highly

centralized system of management, stifling individual initiative.

- Industry and commerce were nationalized down to the smallest enterprise... Inevitably this situation gave rise to an extensive shadow economy, including a black market.

- The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was integrated into the state. The leading role of the Party was written into the state constitution instead of being won in the course of mobilizing the people from the grass roots up.... As a result, working class control and rule were distorted and eventually degenerated into the dictatorship of the Communist Party.... This was accompanied by the erosion of the Party's democratic structures and their replacement by bureaucratic centralism.

- The trade unions also became part of the administrative state structure...

- In the course of all this, Marxism-Leninism was reduced to a dogma justifying the status quo. Its creative, critical function, which is so vital to understanding social development and therefore to solving the problems of building socialism, was effectively removed. It ceased to act as a science and became a dogma....

Such a system, which placed a premium on the safe, conservative approach, ossified socialist society and emptied it of its dynamism. The failure of the system to continue to meet the expectations of the people, the stagnation and fall in living standards and the lack of any effective means to influence events, inevitably led to people looking for other ways to solve their problems....

This is not to deny what was achieved in the Soviet Union. Large-scale industry was developed. There were massive advances in education, and a cultural revolution which changed the face of what had been a very backward country.... The Soviet Union made a tremendous impact on the movement for national liberation against imperialism in the world. Its role in supporting the anti-colonial movement and in the fight for peace is beyond dispute.

But the fact remains that the defects in the Soviet system sapped socialism of its strength within the Soviet Union.

Perestroika set out to break out of this impasse. Its approach was based on democratization and the combination of socialist planning with market mechanisms. The idea was to restore the initiative of the people, to make them the real masters of society, to restore dynamism to socialism....

[Perestroika] failed in the face of conservatism and inertia which had become built-in features of Soviet society.

The contradiction in Soviet society between its authoritarian form and its socialist content, which required the widest expansion of democracy into all spheres of social life, had become intractable....

Without a mass political movement based on the working people and led by a Communist Party armed with a clear perspective for reform,... the pressure for capitalist development became irresistible and descent into chaos almost inevitable....

In the latter stage [of Perestroika], Gorbachev himself moved increasingly towards accepting privatization and aspects of the so-called "free" market philosophy, though he favoured the longer time-scale in achieving any change in that direction....

The undemocratic and adventurist coup, about which the full circumstances are as yet unclear, was the final debacle.... The failed coup helped the 'reformers' to speed up the process of disintegration and Gorbachev's resignation from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, together with his subsequent part in the banning of the Party, was an act of betrayal....

* * * * *

The lesson to be learned from the history of Soviet society since the mid 1920s onwards is that socialism and democracy are inseparable. Democracy is not an added extra, but is integral to socialism.

Socialism is about raising living standards. But it is about more than that. It is about gaining for working people control of their own destiny. It is about overcoming alienation. It is inseparable from the fight for democracy. Indeed

without these there can be no sustained rise in living standards.

It has to be recognized that because they saw the way in which the imperialists were seeking to undermine and isolate the Soviet Union over many decade, communists carried their support of the USSR to the point where they defended many aspects of Soviet life and policy which, with hindsight, were indefensible....

Some communist parties may have failed socialism. Capitalism has failed humanity.

—from the Bulgarian Socialist Party

During the last five years in my country, Bulgaria, the comprehension of the rapid changes was embarrassed because of the extremely strong political confrontation in the context of the so called "velvet revolution."

Most of the evaluations of the system of "real socialism" have been quite superficial because they have been made in situations of severe political struggle within the ex-communist party and between this party and other political forces. These evaluations were influenced also by a phenomenon of a "psychological pendulum" that brought about the strong wave of anticommunism and right-wing fashion in Eastern Europe between 1990 and 1992. In principle, the negative traits of the past in these evaluations were comprehended also as causes of the breakdown of "real socialism" or "communism." Ideological stigmatizing replaced the objective causes.

In fact the position toward 45 years of "socialist development" was not just a central topic of ideological, but also a centre of political, war for justification or denial of the right of existence of the ex-communist party as a legitimate force. The views of the party have also been changing in the course of the development of its ideology from Marxist-Leninist toward the positions of a modern left-wing social-democratic party.

In the new program of the Bulgarian Socialist Party approved in 1994 it claims that it is against

the deformations that have taken place and at the same time is against the depreciation and total defamation of the achievements. Four main reasons of the collapse of "real socialism" are enumerated:

(1) The inefficient, bureaucratic, command-administrative economic system of totally centralized planning that liquidated the private property, market and competitive power of the economy.

(2) The authoritarian political system that did not function democratically and suppressed some important rights and freedoms of the citizens.

(3) The coalescence of the ruling communist parties with the state that brought about heavy deformations of the role and internal self-development of the parties as social-political and parliamentary formations.

(4) The crises of the political and governmental elites that put the rule of the parties and states in the hands of people with mediocre political, intellectual, professional and moral qualities.

At the same time the program of the BSP points out that it is necessary to make a deeper analysis of the failure of Eastern European "real socialism" and that this is a difficult epistemological, social and political task that should be solved in the future.

Methodologically the study of the causes of the fall of "real socialism" can be accomplished from different approaches. The most elementary approach is factorial analysis—an enumeration of the factors for the failure of "real socialism" as it is done in the BSP program.

But the factorial explanation does not explain which factor is more important or a possible ground of the others. A higher possible methodological level is the typological. It means to distinguish or combine different groups of factors because they are from the same area and are closely connected one with another.

The separation of groups of factors, however, is also not enough for a good comprehension of the reasons for the upsets in the former socialist countries. A methodologically higher approach is the systemic. A systemic approach means

the struggle carried on by communists and other leftists in different countries, often in very difficult circumstances. There still exist countries which are building socialism. Movements against capitalism and aiming at socialism are rising again.

— from the Portuguese Communist Party

In our opinion, the collapse of the USSR and the defeats in other Eastern European countries are not, as the forces of capital proclaim, the result of “the failure of communist ideals”, but essentially the result of the gradual introduction of a “model” that departed from fundamental aspects of those ideals.

Thus, instead of the workers’ political power, a strongly centralized power, increasingly divorced from the participation and the feelings of the workers and the masses of the people was eventually set up.

Instead of a political regime which was always defined as a thousand times more democratic than any bourgeois democracy, there was a growing use of repressive measures and violations of legality.

Instead of economic forms of organization that could overcome the obstacles which the capitalist relations of production placed on the development of the productive forces and which could ensure the continuity of such a development, the result was, after a period marked by extraordinary and spectacular historical results, an economy with excessive centralization of State ownership, the elimination of other useful forms of property and management, disdain for the role of the market and the disincentive of workers.

Instead of enhancing inner-party democracy, a strongly centralized leadership which increasingly resorted to administrative processes in order to impose its decisions emerged.

Instead of Marxism-Leninism understood as a revolutionary, dialectic theory, constantly enriched by the changes in life and therefore creatively responding to new phenomena, to new

problems, we witnessed both the dogmatization and the instrumentalization of the theory, whether in the crystallization of concepts or in the opening up to revision of what were valid fundamental principles.

The assessment of all these central aspects of history and of the experiences in building socialist society is not important merely as a correct analysis of history. It must provide lessons that have to be taken into account, in particular by the communists, when correctly insisting on the goal of building a society in accordance with the interests and yearnings of the workers and masses of the people, a society freed from capitalist exploitation—a socialist society.

— from the Communist Party of Sudan

The collapse of the Soviet model of socialism, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, dealt a stunning blow to all who dreamed of and fought for a just social system free from the exploitation of man and the subordination of peoples. The world has changed for the worse for a long time to come.

The leaders and ideologues of capitalism launched a gleeful campaign to besmirch Marxism and socialism, to prove them baseless.... Many of those formerly counted as communists, socialists or leftists joined this vicious campaign. This is to their shame....

It is probably not possible for us to add to the list of defects, mistakes, difficulties, external pressures, crimes, lack of democracy, etc. which led to the defeat of the Soviet model. But we deem it necessary to say that the October Revolution was a historic feat whose significance and influence shall never be obliterated. It blazed a new trail for mankind...

We leave it to unprejudiced historians to enumerate the achievements and failures of the October Revolution and the social system it ushered.... The question now is how did all that end up into such dismal disintegration?

We should dismiss the “conspiracy theory”,

not because no conspiracies were hatched, but because such a theory cannot explain the indifference, apathy and finally the complete disintegration of such giant organizations as the CPSU, the KOMSOMOL, the trade unions, the Soviets, the Red Army and the KGB. Erosion must have eaten into these organizations for many years, perhaps decades, while bureaucrats and careerists wormed their way to their top posts....

Two points seem relevant here:

1- That democracy suffered to the point of systematic violation of human rights and even to state crimes against groups and individuals...

2- That Marxism lagged a long way behind new epochal achievements and discoveries in science and technology...

What is the way out? How do we figure our contribution to be?

We are a small party in one of the most backward and isolated countries in the world... We do not want to repeat the mistake of forming our ideas according to those of our "big brothers," since it was proved that they also make mistakes.... We believe that each party should first fully work out its viewpoints... For [us], the central task is to formulate the theory of the Sudanese Revolution, including the theory of building the revolutionary party which is to lead, with other forces and parties, that revolution...

The crucial thing here is to master the dialectical materialist method... Those who envision Marxism as texts, talk about its 'application'. But since our theory is essentially a guide, it cannot be transformed into an applied science.

Hence it is wrong to justify the crisis of Marxism by saying that the fault is not in the theory, but is in its application. We have to admit here that the conclusions drawn by Marx and Lenin are actually lagging behind the requirements of the present realities. Marxism is not a collection of static slogans. Party strategy and tactics should be governed by reality, and not formulated to conform to those of another country.

— from the Syrian Communist Party

In order to judge any social phenomenon objectively, we must compare what it introduced with that of preceding ones, and not reversibly with what it could not introduce according to the necessities and requirements of life.

Lenin warned against the danger of dealing with social events and phenomena through the second approach. The October Revolution, therefore, has introduced a lot for mankind; what it has introduced would form that background on which future socialist experiences would appear, doubtless better than the past ones...

We see that the problem [of the setback of socialism] lies in the deviated applications of Scientific Socialism, practised far from the spirit of Marxism-Leninism... How can we distinguish between the stages of progress and retreat in the development of socialism, in order to understand what happened? We consider the indicator of economic development—growth rates, productivity increases, national income—objective elements that allow for [such] judgement. Figures indicate that the growth rates in the Soviet Union were high and great till the end of the 1950s and early 1960s; and since then they started decreasing, reaching negative levels in Perestroika. In other words, since practice is the criterion of truth, economic development indicators are serious pointers enabling us to specify the point at which the accumulation of collapse—leading, serious negative factors has started....

The inability of the World Revolutionary Movement to achieve a world strategic progress in the second half of the 20th century laid its burden on the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, leading over time to serious gaps through which the class enemy could penetrate and demolish them from inside. The following, we believe, are the most important reasons that led to the inability of the world revolutionary movement to reach this strategic progress, compared to the first half of the century:

- the splits that took place in the world Communist movement, particularly after the Soviet-Chinese dispute.

- The appearance of opinions that negate the importance of the Communist movement in the countries of the world National Liberation Movement. This weakened the momentum of that movement...

- Attacking and blackening the history of the World Communist Movement under the pretext of criticizing the past, an attack that affected morally, and then materially, the development of this movement as a whole.

- The troubles suffered by the Soviet economy since the early 1960s, resulting from applying measures and thoughts of a capitalist nature to the socialist economy, weakening its future development....

The experience has proved that we must reinstate the thesis of class struggle intensification while moving closer towards socialism... The background for socialism's class struggle cannot be understood without generally considering socialism itself as a transitional stage between capitalism and communism; ie. between two entirely contradictory types of material production: the commodity and the non-commodity.

In that sense, socialism as a transitional stage has its own contradictions, with an essential one that has to be discovered. Without this, the protection of future experiences from reaching similar ends to that of the past may not be ensured....

The World Revolutionary Movement's overcoming of its present crisis is of equal historical importance to that of the appearance of Marxism itself in the middle of the 19th century. After all, the crisis of the World Revolutionary Movement is a crisis of growth against world capitalism that suffers an inescapable crisis, the crisis of aging and decadence.

— from the League of Communists –
Movement for Yugoslavia

Communists have come face to face with crucial questions in the present so-called post-

communist era. If communists and left-wing and progressive forces find the right answers to them and deal successfully with their own mistakes they will affirm the validity of the historical optimism of Marxist theory and the communist orientation in the inexorable progress of mankind despite numerous blunderings and temporary defeats. This theory not only was but still is the prime mover of drives towards a better and more beautiful, just and humane life for people unrestricted in the richness of their activities and hopes.

Socialist societies opened up room for the freedom of all. But when the limits of industrial methods of production had been reached, leading communist forces remained attached to the old ways of centralised planning, state ownership over the means of production and sources of finance, sliding down from the force which changes the world to a force which maintains the status quo. The self-complacency of socialism blurred the picture of a deep disharmony between fundamental values and policies, and reality. In this reality, the large social cake was shared out among top party leaderships until it became small and thin. The inability to face up to one's own mistakes led to the collapse of confidence and the tumbling of social layers into the arms of political forces of a different colour.

Bureaucratism, adherence to routine and internal party antagonisms resulted in the crash of socialism. In socialist federations, communist bureaucratism produced a common state as an agreement between party leaderships on non-aggression for the sake of preserving the status quo. Behind the appearance of multinational harmony, nationalist passions of the population were incited and inflamed in order to secure for oneself, and ostensibly for one's own republic, a defective share-out, more fruits of labour for less work, and to appropriate from others what should assure one's unhindered incompetent power, which was the primary cause of a standstill in development. Blame for one's own ignorance, social discrimination and exploitation was put on the privileged position in the common state of members of another nation or national

minority and some recompense was constantly sought on that account. The speed with which communists shifted from left to right and clutched the national banner, the spread of aggressive nationalism, xenophobia, and hatred for others demonstrates how long antagonising inside a bureaucratised party by excessively proud centralist leaderships had held up demands for change, had compelled the media to propagate and carry out intellectual ostracism which tended to silence, eliminate and punish the courageous and the wise, turning committed communist into dissidents in order to increase disciplined submission, acquire a leading position, or preserve personal benefits. Personal initiative by members of the party was nipped in the bud. Members were made into numbers as social promotion and attainment of specific posts depended on membership in the party. In this way, mass communist parties found themselves to be the private property of the leaderships.

Internationalism in both inter-party and inter-state relations was discredited in many ways. The very idea of socialism was compromised as representing freedom and richness in diversity, where the first objective is a world society of civilisation and communality, peace and progress and not the power of individual national states. Socialism which had emerged as the idea of equality and communality succumbed to attacks on this same communality by the national interests of socialist states. This gave rise to public resentment against countries which were the flagbearers of internationalism and where subjugation of national interests to the interests of a single country was couched in the guise of brotherly aid. Together with the strategy of programmed imperialism, socialism was ruined by divisions among communist parties in socialist countries, their clashes to gain supremacy over ideology and influence in other parts of the world, which was backed up by nothing else but the materialised national interest of communist party leaderships.

— from the Communist Party of Greece

The dramatic upheavals which have taken place during recent years were the starting point for an unprecedented anti-socialist offensive on the part of the various imperialist propaganda machines. Exploiting existing weaknesses and problems, but mainly launching a well-orchestrated propaganda smear campaign unprecedented in scope, they have always wanted to take ideological and political revenge, to vitiate and nullify the enormous role and great contribution of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries to the working people and to all mankind in their struggle for peace, progress and social emancipation. The historical truth however, cannot be falsified.

Socialism and capitalism cannot be compared on the basis of precisely the same criteria or outside the specific historic reality within which each one appeared and developed.

With the appearance and consolidation of the Soviet Union and the world socialist system, the picture of the world changed radically. The socialist system, in cooperation with other sections of the world revolutionary movement, constituted the only real counterweight to the absolutist tendencies of capitalism. No substantial solution to any of the world's serious problems could have been provided without the participation of the world socialist system.

* * * * *

The policy of "perestroika" initially appeared in the slogans proclaiming the "renewal and restructuring" of socialism and as a policy which would lead the way out of the economic and social problems that existed at that period in the building of socialism. Certain of the initial slogans were borrowing from previous efforts by the CPSU during the Andropov period or earlier. But quite soon, it began to reveal its true counter-revolutionary face...

The great question, which justly concerns those who occupy themselves with these developments, is why the counter-revolution did

not meet with any resistance from the people, and why the people did not defend socialism and its gains.

Some people are of the opinion that the policy of "perestroika" started out with good intentions and somewhere along the way "went wrong" and become a vehicle for the counter-revolution. We do not agree with this assessment. Not only because a policy must be judged as a whole and not fragmentarily, but also because it must chiefly be judged on the field of its concrete and practical application and not on the field of pronouncements and slogans.

The "new thinking" in foreign policy was based on the mistaken, anti-scientific position that the fundamental contradiction of our times is the cross-class, i.e. classless, contradiction between war and peace, in which all states may supposedly be interested, irrespective of their social system. Utopian views were put forward which denied some basic features and attributes of imperialism...

The next step, which revealed the true nature of the "perestroika" economic programme, came in 1987, when the law providing for and protecting private ownership and the commodification of the labour force was passed. Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) was used as an example in the psychological and ideological preparation of the Soviet people, even though it had been applied at a different phase in the building of the socialist society and was in the nature of a temporary measure...

* * * * *

On the "morning after" without the Soviet Union, the European socialist countries and the Warsaw Treaty, the world is full of the deep wounds made by the unbridled imperialist intervention, by multinational competition in the redistribution of markets and by the subjugation and annexation of countries, of entire regions even, through the bonds of a savage "modern" colonialism in the heart of Europe and all over the planet.

The reversals of the 1989-91 period created an extremely negative international environment

in the non-European socialist countries of Cuba, Mongolia, China, Vietnam and North Korea. The new problems and contradictions existing in the transition from capitalism to socialism, due to the international balance of forces and the difficulties sustained by the international workers' and communist movement, are increasing and becoming more intense.

* * * * *

The reversal of socialism does not confirm the classic theories about the inevitability of the restoration of capitalism. This became possible because some of the fundamental elements of socialism were weakened, altered and hit, i.e. those regarding the vanguard role of the party and its relationship with the popular masses, elements which constitute the safety valve in defending socialism against any mistakes and schemes either from within or without.

The vanguard, leading role of the party as ruling party and the nucleus of the political system, was gradually lost. It became lax and the party's principles and operating rules and policy for promoting cadres had become blunted.

The communist parties, as shown more clearly by recent developments, regarded their leading, vanguard role in the society as being given and incontestable. The successes in building socialism and in the international field cultivated a spirit of smugness and complacency. Unity with the people and democratic relations with working people and with social organisations—all that was most precious and necessary for socialism—ceased to be of interest and to be kept up and renewed continuously.

Control over the party, its organizations and cadres by the broad popular masses weakened gradually until it finally disappeared. The leading bodies of the communist parties were responsible for undermining the process of criticism and self-criticism from above and below...

Theoretical viewpoints were cultivated or options preferred which constituted deviations from our theory, violations of building principles. The front of struggle with imperialism and

revisionism was weakened.

In some cases, erroneous theories were adopted, which either did not correspond to reality or simplified theoretical issues regarding the building of socialism...

In the name of national specificities and particularities, the immutable laws of the socialist revolution were revised. Views were put forward that through structural reforms and "the policy of democracy" it would be possible for the capitalist system to be transformed into a socialist one, without a revolutionary leap.

There was a delay in the creative evolution, development and enrichment of revolutionary theory by the experience of socialist construction and the action of revolutionary forces.

Without any intention of invalidating the scientific research and theoretical searchings in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, developments indicate that the communist parties were responsible for the theoretical delay in the creative development of Marxist-Leninist theory in conditions of socialist construction and the contemporary world.

The negative phenomena and problems that appeared do not disprove the theoretical position that in the socialist society there is a political transitional period during which the state is expressed by the political term revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat...

The course of socialist construction showed the need, at each phase, at each level of socialist development, to ensure the best possible combination of democracy and centralism in the economic field of society with the primary goal being to improve centralism and develop democracy.

The system of internal contradictions in socialism, which constitutes the core of the materialist dialectic, was overlooked. The need to secure dialectical unity and interaction between the productive relations and productive forces at every phase and level of development was underestimated.

This may prove to be a key issue in many of the questions which concern us here with respect to the ground on which mistakes, weaknesses, deficiencies and finally deviations flourished...

The widespread use in socialism of the advances of the scientific and technological revolution was delayed. Congresses of communist parties in the socialist countries repeatedly identified problems in the unsatisfactory implementation and utilisation of new technologies. The scientific and technological revolution was applied and utilised unequally and selectively: in the military economy, in space, in some sectors of heavy industry and in large-scale projects: less so in the consumer goods and services industries.

The application of the principle of the proletarian internationalism was weakened owing to the loosening of the split in the international communist movement's unity of action in the struggle against imperialism and revisionism.

At critical periods, the united strategy and tactics of the world communist movement was not marshalled against the united strategy and tactics of imperialism. A particularly heavy blow against the unity of the international communist movement was the breach between the CPSU and the Communist Party of China, with repercussions in the international balance of forces and in the unity of action against imperialism.

Mistakes were made in the strategy and tactics of socialism in its confrontation with imperialism. On the part of imperialism, the confrontation between the two systems was not just an ideological struggle, but a form of subversive activity against socialism.

The line of peaceful co-existence as it was developed during the early post-war years, and to some extent at the 19th and mainly 20th Congress, permitted the cultivation of utopian views...

A negative influence was likewise exerted by the assessment of the possibilities and role of social democracy during the post-war period.

* * * * *

The CPG is deeply convinced that the reversal of socialism does not refute, but on the contrary offers many new proofs for the

objective necessity of the socialist prospect not only in our country, but on a planet-wide scale. The great contradictions which humanity is now going through reflect the confrontation between the forces of imperialism and the forces which are fighting for socialism, and express the need for a socialist revolution.

The historic experience of the socialist system in Europe obliges us to pay special attention and to study those aspects of socialist construction which affected the process of the restoration of capitalism.

One of the most valuable lessons has been that the socialist revolution—like its creative work, the building of the primary phase of the communist society, i.e. the socialist society—cannot be realised “without the independent historic creativity of the majority of the population

and above all by the majority of the working people.”

Of particular significance is the study of the problems of the transitional period between capitalism and socialism. The capitalist legacy in all spheres and sectors of life will be particularly painful and heavy...

The experience of the socialist construction and international developments show that it is particularly important to study the problems of state planning and economic levers in administering the economy.

The CPG considers that one of the most basic factors in the strengthening the fight for socialism is unity of action by the communist parties and common action with other left, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces.

On “Some ‘Plain Truths’ Uttered by the Class Enemy”

by V. I. Lenin (1922)

[Note: *SMENA VEKH* was an anti-communist Russian newspaper published in Paris.]

... We, and I particularly, because of my position, hear a lot of sentimental communist lies, “communist fibbing”, every day, and sometimes we get sick to death of them. But now instead of these “communist fibs” I get a copy of *Smena Vekh*, which says quite plainly: “Things are by no means what you imagine them to be. As a matter of fact, you are slipping into the ordinary bourgeois morass with communist flags inscribed with catchwords stuck all over the place.” This is very useful. It is not a repetition of what we are constantly hearing around us, but the plain class truth uttered by the class enemy. It is very useful to read this sort of thing; and it was written not because the communist state allows you to write some things and not others, but because it really is the class truth,

bluntly and frankly uttered by the class enemy....

This is very useful, and I think that we must keep it in mind. It is much better for us if the *Smena Vekh* people write in that strain than if some of them pretend to be almost Communists, so that from a distance one cannot tell whether they believe in God or in the communist revolution. We must say frankly that such candid enemies are useful. We must say frankly that the things Ustryalov speaks about are possible. History knows all sorts of metamorphoses. Relying on firmness of convictions, loyalty, and other splendid moral qualities, is anything but a serious attitude in politics. A few people may be endowed with splendid moral qualities, but historical issues are decided by vast masses, which, if the few do not suit them, may at times treat them none too politely.

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One Year of Peace in Ireland: Some Reflections on the Situation

by Graeme Stout, Ottawa

Over the past year there has been a noticeable silence from progressives about events in Ireland. One would think that when Western Europe's most active guerilla army unilaterally declares its intention to cease hostilities people on the left—Marxists in particular—would have something valuable to say on the matter. So what I propose to do is to outline the current situation and provide an interpretation of the events and conditions leading up to it. This analysis will, I hope, identify and correct some long standing mistakes in judgement.

After one year of peace little or no headway has been made towards a long term peaceful and democratic solution. The reasons for this are as follows. With the beginning of the peace process Sinn Féin and the IRA hoped that the British would follow in the steps of other recent transitions to democratic resolutions e.g., South Africa. In such cases the ruling power has proceeded by releasing political prisoners from jail, revoking exceptional powers to police and judiciary, and engaging in all-party peace talks. In the case of Ireland, the British have refused to comply with any of these standard practices. Instead they have refused to release any prisoners prior to the completion of sentences, re-instated the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and refused to deal with Sinn Féin. The reason they give is that until the IRA hand over their weapons there will be no movement towards a settlement. But, as former Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Albert Reynolds has stated, such a precondition was never set by the British and Irish Governments.

The IRA has no categorical objection to turning in its guns. In fact, they believe that demilitarization would help foster peaceful forms of government and dialogue. What the British refuse to accept is that the removal of weapons from Irish politics includes those of the British

army. This is, of course, an unreasonable demand for the British to make. Although British troops are now off the street, the British army is re-enforcing its presence in areas where it would have been impossible up until now.

Why did the IRA and the British government embark on the road of negotiations? One of the main reasons, as noted earlier in the case of South Africa's move toward bourgeois democracy, is that recent trends in world politics has sided with peaceful, internationally mediated settlements. Likewise recent international media presentations of the situation in the North of Ireland have moved away from the portrayal of the IRA as a ruthless band of murders (as the ANC were depicted in the Cold War era). Instead, the object of criticism finally came to be the Unionist para-militaries and the British Security Forces. The reason for this change was the recent increase in indiscriminate murders by Unionist forces of Catholics and Republicans. Since the start of the "troubles" casualties in the war had been, more or less, equally divided. From the early 1990s on this equilibrium shifted drastically to the detriment of the Nationalist Community.

This shift had two main causes. The first was that Unionist para-militaries became more aggressive in their tactics, killing politically neutral members of the Irish Community. The second reason was the IRA's movement away from military actions that proved "embarrassing" given the death and injury to non-combatants. Together these led to a dramatic shift in the demographics of political violence in the space of a few years.

However, it was the latter which led directly to the more recent movement towards peace. The IRA turned away from a military plan of action that targeted the six British controlled counties of Ulster and focused instead on

economic and political institutions on the British Mainland. The cause for this was a concurrent shift in the policy of the British ruling class away from the colonial past to a future of an integrated European economy; a future which the British elite envisioned having London as the banking capital.

The problem with this dream was that it could only be a dream as long as a guerilla army was destroying millions of dollars of property in your financial district and closing down your airports with mortar attacks. The initial result of the IRA's new military plan was hesitancy on the part of European capital to locate in London. The end result was British finance telling the Conservative Government of John Major to stop talking tough and to start talking with the IRA. So the British Government turned their back on their traditional allies in the Unionist community and began negotiations with the Republicans. The IRA for their part were more than willing to talk given their recent image change in fortunes.

So stands the current situation.

Where should Marxists stand on these issues? In the past, the situation was often written off as the outcome of religious intolerance. Not that such an opinion is invalid, but that there is far more beneath the surface: viewing the conflict as sectarian is to view the conflict as the bourgeois media would have us do.

The history of the struggle in the North of Ireland has been a picture of British interference in Irish political life. The means used was the privileging of one section (Protestant Ulster-Irish) over another (Catholic Irish) to guarantee a working class that was mainly loyal and completely divided. And it worked incredibly well for over fifty years. What undermined the entire "apartheid" system of the six counties was the fact that the British ruling class no longer had the same interest in the industrial heartland of Ireland that it did at the beginning of the century. Now all that is left "holding the fort" is

the petty bourgeoisie of the North, realizing that they have the most to lose from change.

One of the most staggering changes in the past few years—and one that casts serious doubt on the sectarianism thesis—is the growing class stratification in the six counties. Gone are the days when your religion determined your politics. Now Catholic middle-class politicians speak of maintaining the Union; their reason, their social standing. No longer do Unionist parties ban Catholics; now they often openly court them. The fact is that as Britain begins to move away from Ireland the middle classes, who have always depended on the British for their social stature, realize that there is a strong likelihood of their buoyed status quickly being reduced.

And in some ways it is the same story in the South of Ireland. Here the bourgeoisie is looking with scepticism at the prospects of reunification. One reason is that industrialized Ulster is no longer the jewel that it once was. Moreover, this would be the first time in the history of the Irish State they would have to contend with a militant industrial working class. And the ruling elite in the South also perceives that the inclusion of the North would jeopardize the hold of the church and the rural and urban bourgeoisie on the people of Ireland. In 1914 James Connolly rightly predicted that partition "would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South"¹ and to this day a divided Ireland has been an Ireland hostile to labour. Now, throughout Ireland—North and South—the middle class is becoming weary of any form of political movement. Surprisingly the British seem to have the ruling class with the most resolve towards some definitive action.

The oddest piece in the puzzle is the Protestant working class. For the first time since partition it is beginning to sense that it might very well have been duped all along. The signs are not clear, but they are emerging. The question is how will their disappointment be focused: in

¹ - James Connolly, *Irish Worker*, March 14, 1914. (Connolly was the founder of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, the Irish Citizens' Army, and a leader of the Easter Uprising of 1916.)

direct attack against the Nationalist community, or by turning on the ruling class that has led them along? In many cases pro-British Unionism (as a broader political entity) is changing radically by dropping the nationalist rhetoric that has characterized it, and beginning to argue for the Union on solely economic grounds. The problem is that the economic goals of the Ulster Unionist leadership is not that of the Protestant working class.

As for the Catholic working class, they stand alone in many ways; neither close to their class neighbours in the North, nor their national brethren in the South. After twenty-five years of open conflict the militant nature of the Republican movement has developed a mixture of socialist and nationalist ideals with a strong tradition of civil and cultural rights. The tie to Catholicism, but not necessarily the Catholic Church itself, remains strong. For unlike the

South, the Catholic Church in the North is seen as a political symbol more than an institution of political power.

The Republican movement has been strengthened in many ways by a lack of middle class politicians who—as history has shown in Ireland—have all too often sided with the British when the price of freedom or justice is extracted from them. It is this that makes the Catholic working class “dangerous” for Irish bourgeois politics.

The key test for the Republican community comes when the Unionist working class begins to wake from its slumber. Even now Republicans are beginning to talk with representatives of the Unionist working class who—unlike their middle class brethren—believe that dialogue between communities is the only way to solve the difficulties of the past and those that lie ahead.

CPC Constitution Amended

By Chris Frazer

At the 31st Convention of the Communist Party of Canada (May 19–22, 1995) delegates adopted a number of amendments to the Party's constitution which completed the work started at the 30th Convention. Most of the amendments had been referred, due to a lack of time, from the 30th Convention. In addition there were a small number of new amendments and other motions dealing with the constitution, which had been moved in the pre-discussion period and during the 30th Convention itself.



The main thrust of the constitutional amendments was to strengthen the principle of democratic centralism in the Party, in the wake of an attempt to liquidate the Party after the temporary victory of the reformists at the 28th Convention. Among other things, the amendments were aimed at preventing organizational gerrymandering, the hijacking of elected bodies at all levels of Party organization, electoral procedures and rights within the Party, and the manipulation of

disciplinary procedures in order to expel members or deny membership without due process. In addition, there were amendments adopted that clarified the conditions required for membership in the Party, and which tabled the issue of finalizing the relationship between the Communist Party of Canada and the *Parti communiste du Quebec* (PCQ).

The most important resolutions and amendments to the constitution adopted at the 31st Convention are as follows.

With respect to the relationship between the CPC and the PCQ, the Convention voted to table consideration of this matter until the 32nd Convention (to be held within two years of the 31st Convention). The Convention judged that it was premature to anticipate this relationship given the current nature of the struggle to determine Quebec's relationship with Canada.

With respect to the election of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) the Convention confirmed that the CEC will be elected from, and by, the Central Committee (CC), and that this election must be ratified by secret ballot by the Convention. The CEC is directly responsible

to the CC and may be changed by the CC by a majority vote.

With respect to disciplinary action and summary expulsion, the Convention instituted an appeal process to protect the rights of those members accused of being an undercover agent or agent provocateur.

With respect to membership requirements, the Convention voted to prohibit any forms of membership discrimination based on gender (rather than using the older term "sex") and sexual orientation, in addition to earlier prohibitions on discrimination based on race, national origin or religious belief. The expressions "race" and "national origin" were both dropped and "ethnic origin" inserted instead. The minimum age of eligibility for party membership was lowered from 18 to 16.

The Convention also passed a resolution committing the Central Committee to a review of dues structure, as well as an amendment requiring the Party's provincial leaders to be elected at provincial conventions, as the federal leader is elected at the Central Convention.

The Struggle for Gay Rights

By Daniel Guertin, Ottawa

In days of old, in an era now termed Antiquity, when societies were challenged by tribal wars and elements and when civilisation was in birth, there existed a congenial thriving lifestyle called homosexuality. Love, unrestricted in its natural development uncoded by any ethics but the heart, encompassed all.

Only when one god had supplanted all others—East or West—did normative cultural assimilation take place; thereafter followed millennia of oppression for those who found passion a thing unlimited by gender or differences. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals faced

a dark age of incomprehension and torments; they were to survive, undoubtedly, the longest discrimination ever suffered by a minority within humanity.

A trend of sympathy emerged following the Renaissance; ideals of justice and freedom prevailed, and the Western world produced movements of sexual liberation, mostly in France, Germany, the U.K. and the USA. Decriminalisation was a central theme.

After the Russian Revolution, while equality for women was the order of the day, all criminal repression ended for gays and lesbians in an

unprecedented—and unsurpassed—effort of centring the social focus on state matters and evolution instead of the private realm. The World League for Sexual Reform reports the words of Dr. Baktis' *Sexual Revolution in Russia*: "As for homosexuality, sodomy, and whatever other forms of sexuality that are considered as moral violations by European legal codes, Soviet law treats them just the same as so-called natural intercourse. All forms of intercourse are private matters."

Later, in the early 1930s, European trends in politics, for example in the German Communist Party, prompted many freedom-seekers and artists such as André Gide to get involved with the left.

But Stalinist policies, prompted by a collectivisation blitz, replaced workers' councils in favour of a conformist centrality where unions had lost managerial rights and control over working conditions. Reflecting on the monarchial-like totalitarian purges, someone said "Stalin killed and tortured more Communists than any other dictator of the 20th century..." Nazis tried to top-up the figures, but the fact remains that many lost hope for a just social system due to the reactionary mass arrests, killings and deportations that ensued.

The sexual revolution, however, is not so easily uprooted, and it soon was ready again to confront any forms of fundamentalism; after all, a wrong turn in an otherwise progressive system was no deterrent to the hundreds of millions of supporters of the rainbow-coloured flag. France, South Africa, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg are now countries where homosexuality is legal. The official 10% homosexuality figure, biased to the right as figures always are, seems to be growing, as oppression lessens and more step out of the closet, mingling with others whose efforts are to live a life free of prejudices. Millions of hours of activism are not resulting in the re-emergence of the right to love for the third sex.

In North America, gay human rights activists have been lobbying for social changes since day one, always hard-working in the face of deceit, false promises arrests and postponements of legislation by conservative or "new right" governments. Always a new guard has re-emerged to fight for what they believe to be an objective scientific truth: there is no basis for laying it down that just one form of sex is "normal".

In 1977, a breakthrough occurred in Canada with Quebec's inclusion of sexual orientation to its Charter of Human Rights. Other provinces have since followed suit, with Alberta and the Atlantic provinces, and the N.W.T. trailing behind as exceptions.

In 1968 our country guaranteed the freedom of privacy to its citizens, but the struggle isn't over yet.

Eight years ago the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights unanimously recommended that sexual orientation be included as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Since then the Canadian Human Rights Commission has repeatedly requested the same thing from the government. Yet EGALE, the national forum for Equality for Gays And Lesbians Everywhere, among others, is still waiting for results.

June 1993 saw Canada calling on the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights for an end to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation; but it still hasn't amended its own *Human Rights Act*!

Anger and frustrations grow over such a blatant lack of social justice, affecting an ever-increasing proportion of citizens. Schools, universities and local municipal, provincial, national and international groups all over are pushing for progress. Already many unions have fought for and gained same-sex benefits. Success and pride will prevail when the many are made aware of—and join—the ongoing fight against hatred and discrimination.

The Cultural Worker's Responsibility to the People

by Margaret Fairley

We reprint from the Spring 1968 issue of HORIZONS: The Marxist Quarterly the following article by comrade Margaret Fairley (1885-1968)

This question is not something new in our age. Looking into the history of the arts we find that in periods of finest artistic activity the artist has been close to his audience. And throughout human history this audience has, surprisingly often, been the whole urban population. Architecture, sculpture, painting, drama, music have been either out on the streets or in public buildings such as cathedrals and temples for all to enjoy.

What was the responsibility of these earlier artists? Whether they realized it or not, what they actually did was to enlarge the experience of the people, giving them through thought and feeling a widening and deepening of their personalities.

Is not this still the responsibility of artists? It is not new, but it desperately needs restating in our time. For the flight of artists from responsibility is so widespread, so fashionable, that it is very hard for young ambitious men and women to resist. Critics and professors praise the painting and the poetry which say nothing of importance about anything, and nothing at all about the outer world. The notion of enlarging the experience off their fellows through their creative work is completely foreign to very many writers and artists.

What then can the artist who is aware of the trend, and of the need to correct it, do? In a country like Canada he will probably have to give up hope of earning a living by his creative work. He may find a small audience, and to keep his integrity he must be satisfied with this. But he can do a good deal by his influence on young artists and young audiences. And the first all-

important step is to help them to look out upon the world, and understand and admit that what they see going on around them is far more important and far more exciting than what is going on, or failing to go on, in their own heads.

To look outward, to enlarge experience, that is, and always has been, the first job of the artist. And it is precisely this which is not only ignored but outspokenly denied by so many of today's painters and poets.

Recently, in Toronto, Canada's finest playwright, Gratien Gelinas, spoke to a university audience on the future of our theatre. Theatre, he said, does not exist without an audience, and it exists primarily to please that audience. Addressing himself to some would-be playwright, he said: So write that your neighbour will come and will recognize himself on the stage. He will sit with his hands on his knees; he will laugh and he will weep, and will not want to go away. This neighbour, he went on to say, is a man in your town, on your street, a man you must know and understand.

Listening to this simple and moving appeal, I could not help thinking how inadequate some of us have been in our thoughts about our own role in the contemporary struggles of our fellows.

Our first responsibility is to understand these struggles as they affect our next-door neighbours. Our second is to express these struggles in our own work. Our third is to help young people to break away from the empty, non-committal attitudes which are fashionable. Gratien Gelinas was right.

How can the young people be helped? Every parent and teacher who is aware of what is going on in the world can help them to look outward instead of inward. The baby who is carried to a window will almost certainly stop crying. He is sounder in mind than the one who is left in his crib to brood over his wet diaper. By directing

eyes and ears outward, more than by argument or indoctrination, can the first steps toward a truthful presentation of life by artists be taken. Not until men really see will they begin to act.

In English-speaking Canada the people who are breaking through to an audience, chiefly of young people, are the satiric artists on the stage. We are at home with satire as we are not with serious drama; at home with Moliere and Shaw; as we are not with Ibsen. Every year a successful satire show, Spring Thaw, runs for weeks and months, in small towns as well as in cities, opening the eyes of many young people, who "sit and laugh, and do not want to go away."

But the fashion of ignoring the outer world, of playing with colors or with words, is very powerful, and young artists and writers need all the help they can get to withstand it. They can

get help in school and college by the emphasis laid by teachers on the outward-looking character of great traditional painting and literature; through emphasis on the public character of historical figures, on services rendered rather than on private virtue. And in various branches of study they may be helped to understand the importance of the recording and documentation of our lives, both in the past and in the present. Canada is particularly rich in documentation of reality through the arts. Our travel books, autobiographies, much of our painting, almost all of our films, are records of real life, and writers and artists of the present day may well consider whether this is not still the best contribution they can make towards whole-hearted commitment by artists in present-day struggles.

Notes:

Join the Communist Party of Canada!



Join the party that puts working people ahead of corporate profits, the party that fights for a socialist Canada! Contact either our central, provincial or local offices (below) to request more information or to apply for membership:

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